

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01

SAM-01 SAJ-01 EB-07 AID-05 TRSE-00 SCCT-01 /080 W

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P R 150825Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4327

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6173

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE IS JO

SUBJECT: LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER INCIDENTS

REF: USDAO TEL AVIV 0823 MAY 75

1. PRIOR TO RECEIPT REFTEL, WE HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY COL. REUTER'S FAILURE (USDAO TEL AVIV 0818) TO INDICATE THAT IDF'S UNDERSTANDABLE CONCERN RE POSSIBLE FEDAYEEN CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS PLANNED TO COINCIDE WITH ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY AND WITH LAST YEAR'S MAY 15 TERRORIST RAID ON MAALOT MIGHT BE FACTOR BEHIND LATEST ISRAELI INCURSIONS INTO LEBANON. ISRAELIS, IN OUR EXPERIENCE, ARE NOT IN HABIT OF SUDDENLY RENEWING SEARCH-AND-KIDNAP OPERATIONS(AS DISTINCT FROM CUSTOMARY PATROLLING AND SHELLING) ON LEBANESE SIDE OF BORDER UNLESS IDF PERCEIVES OR SENSES SOME HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF (OR POTENTIAL FOR) FEDAYEEN CROSS-BORDER MISCHIEF-MAKING. ALTHOUGH IDF MAY LACK SPECIFIC INTELLIGENCE IN THIS REGARD, WE THINK FEDAYEEN WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY WISH TO

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ESCALATE CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITY AS FOLLOW-ON TO RECENT UPSURGE

IN TERRORIST OPERATIONS (LARGELY INSPIRED BY FATAH, ACCORDING TO OUR LOCAL SOURCES) DEEPER WITHIN ISRAELI-CONTROLLED TERRITORY (JERUSALEM 875).

2. WE HAVE BEEN PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION OF LATE TO LIKELIHOOD THAT VARIOUS FEDAYEEN GROUPS--THEIR IMAGINATIONS HAVING BEEN FIRED BY "GUERRILLA" VICTORIES OVER "FORCES OF IMPERIALISM" IN INDOCHINA--MIGHT SEEK TO REINVIGORATE THEIR SO-CALLED "ARMED STRUGGLE" AGAINST ISRAEL. FEDAYEEN "REJECTIONIST" GROUPS OF COURSE NEED LITTLE URGING IN THIS DIRECTION, BUT THEIR CAPACITY FOR MOUNTING OPERATIONS (PARTICULARLY WITHIN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ISRAEL PROPER) IS CONSIDERABLY LOWER THAN THEIR CAPACITY FOR RHETORIC AND POSTURING. TERRORIST POTENTIAL POSSESSED BY FATAH AND PLO ELEMENTS IS ANOTHER STORY, HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY AT TIME WHEN PLO'S SO-CALLED "MODERATE" LEADERSHIP IS ANXIOUS TO (A) DISTRACT LEBAANESE AND ARAB ATTENTION FROM FEDAYEEN ROLE IN RECENT DISTURBANCES AND CONTINUING POLITICAL TURMOIL IN LEBANON, (B) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CRISIS IN CONFIDENCE WHICH 'ARAFAT AND CO. IMAGINE IS CURRENTLY STRAINING US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, AND (C) PREVENT THEMSELVES FROM BEING OUTFLANKED AND OUTBID BY RADICAL, "LEFTIST" ELEMENTS (E.G., ABU IYAD, ABU SALEH, HAWATMEH, ZOHAYR MUHSEN) WHO, ACCORDING TO REPORTS KNOWN TO DEPT VIA SEPARATE CHANNEL, ARE CURRENTLY VYING WITH 'ARAFAT FOR GREATER INFLUENCE AND CONTROL WITHIN PLO HIERARCHY. AS POSSIBLE HARBINGER OF FUTURE TROUBLE ALONG LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER, WE NOTE THAT PLO PROPAGANDA APPARATUS HAS ALREADY BEGUN REPORTING YET ANOTHER FEDAYEEN "TOTAL ALERT" IN ANTICIPATION OF MORE FAR-REACHING ISRAELI "AGGRESSIONS" AGAINST LEBANON (FBIS JN 130542).

3. IN RATHER MORE FRIVOLOUS VEIN, WE CANNOT HELP COMMENTING THAT IF IDF CONTINUES "ARREST" LEBANESE WHOM IT FINDS TO POSSESS FIREARMS (PARA 3 USDAO TEL AVIV 818), IT WILL SOON HAVE VAST BULK OF MALE POPULATION OF THIS COUNTRY BEHIND BARS IN ISRAEL.
GODLEY

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